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SUBJECT: SLA/AW INFIGHTING CONTINUES; REBELS FAIL TO TAKE GOLO

REF: KHARTOUM 64

1. (SBU) Summary: The January 5 killing of Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) faction Commander Abdalla Bakr (reftel) has led to sporadic infighting within the movement, according to unconfirmed reports out of Jebel Marra. Meanwhile, elements of the SLA/AW faction attacked the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in Golo on January 13 but failed to capture the town, according to UN and rebel sources. Offices of the Danish Refugee Council in Golo were looted during the hostilities. UNAMID has appealed to the conflicting parties to allow an investigative patrol team to visit the area. Meanwhile in North Darfur, a SAF force allegedly attacked a Fur village east of Ain Siro, killing civilians and looting property. The motive of the attack is unknown. End Summary.

KILLING SPARKS INFIGHTING AMONG SLA/AW

2. (SBU) The killing of SLA/AW Commander Abdalla Bakr on January 5 (reftel) has resulted in sporadic infighting within the movement, according to unconfirmed reports out of Jebel Marra. UNAMID received information that on January 12, a group loyal to SLA Chairman Abdul Wahid Al Nur attacked the position of soldiers aligned with SLA/AW General Commander Gaddura in Kuturun, approximately 15 km east of Nertiti. The resulting clash is said to have resulted in one dead and four wounded.

3. (SBU) Speaking to emboff on January 13, SLA/AW Commander Hassan Yousif addressed the source of tension within SLA/AW. He asserted that like the deceased Abdalla Bakr, most SLA/AW commanders are in favor of rebel unification efforts supported by U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan (SE) Scott Gratton, as well greater engagement with the international community. Those who oppose these efforts are largely relatives of SLA/AW Chairman Abdul Wahid Al Nur and constitute a minority, he said. He urged renewed pressure on the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) to release detained SLA/AW Chief of Staff Yousif Ahmed Yousif, known as Karjakola. (Note: Several other SLA/AW commanders, including Suleiman Marajan and Musa Morni, also urged the release of Karjakola. End Note.)

SLA/AW ATTACKS SAF IN GOLO, FAILS TO CAPTURE TOWN

14. (SBU) On January 13, SLM/AW forces led by Ezhak Qui, an SLA/AW Commander loyal to Abdel Wahid, attacked the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in Golo (60 km northeast of Nertiti), according to UN and rebel sources. Government of Sudan (GoS) Antonov aircraft later bombarded the vicinity of Golo, and the fighting reportedly subsided in the afternoon. No details on casualties or displacement have emerged, though on January 14 UNAMID Spokesman Nouredine Mezni appealed to the conflicting parties to allow a UNAMID investigative patrol team to the area.

15. (SBU) While it appears that SLA/AW forces may have pushed the SAF out of Golo for a short period on January 13, conflicting information has emerged as to whether they successfully captured the town. Speaking to emboff via satellite phone on January 15, SLA/AW Commander Osman Yousif claimed that his movement still maintained a presence in Golo, despite SAF aerial bombardment. Yet SLA/AW Commander Hassan Yousif dismissed such claims. He told emboff that the SAF retained control of Golo, despite attempts by elements of SLA/AW to attack the SAF garrison there.

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16. (SBU) During the hostilities in Golo on January 13, a group of armed men broke into the office of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and stole the DRC's sole vehicle, as well as their satellite phones and office equipment, according to the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). GoS police visited the office of the DRC shortly thereafter, and assured them the attack by SLA/AW had been repulsed and that a temporary calm had been restored. On January 13-14, approximately 30 SAF vehicles with armed personnel on board were seen leaving Geneina toward East Jebel Marra, according to UN sources, presumably to provide reinforcement for Golo. SLA/AW Commander Osman Yousif also told emboff that SAF troops were gathering in Khor Ramala, coming from the direction of Geneina, as well as in Malam.

SAF ATTACKS FUR VILLAGE IN NORTH DARFUR

17. (SBU) Rebel sources reported that on January 15, a SAF force comprised of nine vehicles attacked the area of Furug, a primarily Fur village east of Ain Siro. The attack was said to be organized by an Arab SAF Commander, Lt. Col. Abdel Elah Bango, and reportedly resulted in the death of over a dozen civilians with many more injured. Numerous camels and donkeys were also said to be killed or taken. The motive of the attack is not known. According to UNDSS, on January 16 three NGO staff members on their way from Ain Siro to Kutum were detained in Mastria (27 km North of Kutum) by SLA/AW forces, allegedly for protective reasons as a result of the fighting in Furug. When contacted, the local SLA/AW commander stated the staff will be released no later than January 19.

18. (SBU) Comment: SLA/AW has traditionally held purely defensive positions in Jebel Marra, making the attack on Golo somewhat of a surprise. SLA/AW is said to be weak in military and logistical equipment, so the attack may have been motivated by material gain; the looting of NGO offices in Golo would seem to support this premise. The Golo attack is also the final nail in the coffin for the oft-violated 2004 N'Djamena Ceasefire Agreement; prior to this attack, SLA/AW is the only party which could conceivably claim to be honoring it. As for the reported SAF attack near Ain Siro, if

true, it may have been carried out in retaliation for SLA/AW
aggression in Golo. End Comment.
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